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UPPER EGYPT:

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ITS PEOPLE AND ITS PRODUCTS.

A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT
OF THE
MANNERS, CUSTOMS, SUPERSTITIONS, AND OCCUPATIONS OF
THE PEOPLE OF THE NILE VALLEY, THE DESERT, AND THE RED SEA COAST,
WITH SKETCHES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY AND GEOLOGY.

BY

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WITH A PREFATORY NOTICE
BY DR. GEORG SCHWEINFURTH,
Author of "The Heart of Africa."

[title page]

NEW YORK:
SCRIBNER, ARMSTRONG, & CO.
1878.

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CHAPTER III.

WORKING DAYS AND HOLIDAYS, DAYS OF JUBILEE AND DAYS OF MOURNING.

WORKING-DAY LIFE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.

512 513 [783] [782] [779] In Upper Egypt the life of the ordinary inhabitant of the towns is passed in a simple and uniform manner. Before sunrise he leaves his couch, performs the morning ablutions enjoined by his religion, and repeats his early prayer. To say his morning prayer after sunrise is forbidden by the ordinances of his religion, and to allow the sun to rise above one's slumbering head is universally regarded as prejudicial to health. He then drinks his cup of coffee and smokes his 512 264 [272] [276] [265] pipe, either at home or in the public coffee-house. His breakfast, which he takes after his coffee (though sometimes before it), consists of the remains of his meal of the previous evening, or of cakes and milk, or for a trifle he procures from the market the ever ready national dish of *ful*, that is, stewed [262] beans. He then engages in his vocations, buys, sells, writes, 512 461 [539] works, or moves about, all in the most comfortable, quiet, and deliberate manner. "What is not done to-day may be to-morrow"—in good Arabic, *bokra in shah Allah* (to-morrow if God please)—stands written on his forehead in large letters. [521] The most urgent affairs leave always a quarter of an hour free in which to gossip with acquaintances over coffee and a pipe, be it in retail-shop, workshop, or office. And if many acquaintances turn up the more numerous grow these quarters-of-an-hour. Now and again he has no work, or no desire [574] to do it, and then he drags himself from one friend to the 512 other. Bread for himself and his family will no doubt turn [539] up; *robinna kerim*—"the Lord is gracious (or liberal);" it is [621] but little he requires, and in case of necessity his soft-hearted neighbour will not allow him to go supperless to bed. Even [782] before the mid-day call of the muezzin from the minaret, he

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has made his preparations for the hour of prayer, and after the performance of his devotions he returns home and enjoys his simple dinner. This consists for the most part only of bread with fruits or with white country cheese, milk, salt fish, or molasses (the so-called black honey).

He takes care not to make his mid-day sleep too short, especially in the long warm days of summer, and he lies down in his house or in his shop, in the café, or in any shady spot in the open air; at this time the streets and markets become deserted. Not till well through the afternoon does he again move, when he begins the second portion of the day as he did the first, with ablutions, prayers, and coffee, afterwards bestirring himself with some energy to make up during the remainder of the day for the time he has dreamed and trifled away. For this remainder is but short, and with the last rays of the setting sun the call from the minaret is again heard, the trader shuts his shop, the workman flings by his tool, the scholar, the writer, and the man of learning shut their books. This dawdling habit, which, in the province, at least, is the rule, is not, however, solely the result of indolence, but arises more from the fact that little trade or industry exists, and the want of a regular weekly day of rest is also not without blame. The natives when necessary often display the greatest ardour and even steady perseverance.

The cultivation of the fields allows the countryman less leisure for the *dolce far niente*, but even he does not overwork himself. From the mellowness and fertility of the soil his labour is light enough when compared with that of a northern peasant, and chiefly consists in the artificial watering of the land, effected mostly by the labour of young people or of cattle. When he can the countryman also takes his hours of idleness, and sleeps, and gossips, and sings. He too is never in a hurry. This slowness of action, intimately connected as it is with fatalism, is as intolerable to a European who is in haste, as it is beneficial to one who wishes to rest a little from the hurry and scurry of the West.

After his evening devotions the dweller in the town moves

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512 264 262 After his evening devotions the dweller in the town moves homeward to his house, where his supper is already awaiting him. At this meal, which is generally the principal meal of the day, he quite acts the gourmand. His wife brings it to [915] him on a round wooden board elevated on pieces of wood or short feet (*tablieh*); among richer people a shield-like metal plate (*sanieh*) is used instead. The basis of the meal is bread made of wheat or millet flour, or hot unleavened cakes—of which he devours incredible quantities—baked over a fire of [252] dung. His wife has also boiled or fried for him a fish with onions and oil, or there lies in the pot a young pigeon or a fowl, the juice of which tastes excellently when the cakes are dipped in it. Sometimes also a small piece of mutton, buffalo, camel, or goat flesh has been procured, with which the soaked *bamiyehs* or the viscous-juiced, spinach-like *moluchieh* are cooked. These, however, are the more expensive viands, and in the evening also people on ordinary occasions are satisfied with the *ful*, which has become so much a national dish, and which (beans in general), according to Herodotus, was forbidden to the ancient Egyptians, or at least to the priests, and hence also to the Pythagoreans. Other dishes are such as lentils boiled in water without flesh, ful with moluchieh, a thick flour paste, coarsely ground barley or wheat, a cake made with butter, an omelet, fruit, roasted grain, salt, and caraway, and especially raw onions. All these except ful were also eaten by the ancient Egyptians, [104] with the addition of papyrus and lotus. The consumption of lentils was so general that Strabo believed that the nummulites of the mountains were the fossilized remains of the lentils used by the labourers. Whenever it is possible two or three kinds of dishes must be on the table, and the inhabitant of the town tastes of them indiscriminately, taking a piece now from this, now from that.

512 After the evening meal our citizen either remains at home enjoying a dignified ease in his harem, or he takes up his position before his house, stretched out in the dust of the street, or squatting amidst a knot of peaceful neighbours; less frequently he visits the café again, or calls on a friend in his [514] house or court-yard if he has a friend able and ready to

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gather his friends around him for a social meeting in the evening. The light of the moon and stars suffices, or if in winter they must retreat into the dark chamber, the weak glimmer of an oil-lamp. In this country nothing is known of nocturnal labours either of hand or head even among the learned, and the many blind and blear-eyed people that here wander about have not contracted their ailments through overstraining their eyes. As to-day is, so is to-morrow, and the most momentous events passing in the great world here make on most people no impression whatever. For it is only a very few that receive a newspaper, and still fewer understand it, partly because its language is too fine, and therefore not suited to the mass, partly because the necessary previous knowledge of every kind is absent. Among the ancient Egyptians the common people, such as artisans, were forbidden under severe penalties to mingle in politics. It is only the most urgent necessity that causes the citizen to take a journey, and when he does travel he makes a pilgrimage to Meccah, or, at most, goes to some other country in which Islam prevails. For in the land of the Franks something would every instant come into collision with his ideas and customs; he would have to eat, if not swine's flesh, yet dishes in which swine's fat forms an ingredient; he would have to eat carrion (that is, the flesh of animals strangled, and not slaughtered with an invocation to God); he would not have the proper conditions for the performance of his religious duties, such as his ablutions and prayer five times a day, nor any mosque or muezzin. If he ever happens to have been in Europe, or even in a town in which the Frankish mode of life prevails, he never ceases to tell his countrymen of the ridiculous and preposterous things he saw there, of course not without admitting that there was much good also, especially if there be a Frank among his audience. The ancient Egyptians had a still stronger prejudice and fanaticism against foreign people and foreign things.

LIFE OF THE WOMEN.

Though the members of the opposite sex certainly do not

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512 562 groan and languish under the burden of their daily labours, yet they do not, as the common descriptions of harem life lead us to believe, recline the live-long day on the soft divan enjoying the *dolce far niente*, adorned with gold and jewels, smoking, and supporting upon the yielding pillow those arms that indolence makes so plump, while the eunuchs and female slaves stand before them watching their every sign, and anxious to spare them the slightest movement. Such slothful dames may indeed be found here and there in the harems of the great, but are not confined to this country. People fall again and again into the mistake of comparing the life of the women of our middle ranks with that of those that occupy the harems of the great! The care of house and family lies much more heavily upon the women here, and there is enough to attend to even if, being assisted by female slaves, as is the case in the higher ranks, they have not to put to their hands themselves, and confine themselves only to giving orders. Cooking, baking, sewing, embroidering, washing, and scouring must be carried on, and children must be attended to here as well as elsewhere—there is no reading nor pianoforte playing, however.

[513] 515 [512] Before sunrise women and children are already awake and moving, many indeed under cover of the dark gray dawn proceed to the river to bathe and wash themselves. The toilette, however, is not usually the first thing that demands attention; the kitchen must first be attended to in order to let the husband away to his occupation. A complete toilette including combing and plaiting of the hair is not in many cases indulged in every day even among ladies of the better class. In this way time and trouble are spared, but a certain class of vermin are left almost unmolested, and establish themselves often so firmly among the black locks of the Eastern beauties that they cannot be extirpated notwithstanding the raids that are made upon them from time to time—even with the application of gray mercurial ointment. As a rule the toilette is associated with a bath, to which praiseworthy enjoyment high and [368] low are attached, whether it be taken in the public bathing establishment, in the river, the sea, or at home by means of

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a shallow tub, and by pouring warm water over the body and scrubbing it with soap and date bast. In the public baths certain hours or days are set apart for the fair sex, and here many women spend half days bathing, adorning themselves, smoking, and gossiping. At these times no male, not even a eunuch would dare to set foot in the apartments.

In other respects also the women are by no means robbed of social pleasures. They visit each other often enough, if possible early in the morning, and are wont to remain half a day, a whole day, or even several days, though both parties may be in the same town. They smoke, drink coffee (the latter being less in use among the women than among the men—the opposite to what holds good among the Franks), gossip, show their ornaments and finery, tell stories and wonderful tales, sew, embroider (but do not knit), sing and dance, or better, make some one sing and dance before them (since a well-conducted lady ought neither to be seen nor heard, and therefore should not sing), laugh and make merry—in short the harem so greatly pitied elsewhere enjoy life, but on the sole condition, that no man be present! They are less often allowed to take a walk in the open air; some—and this is considered a great virtue—never leave the house after their marriage. Their lady friends come to visit them instead, and as almost every house in these regions has its court-yard or a terrace, women are by no means kept out of the open air. Moslim women are generally excused from the burdensome prayers of the men, and pious or even hypocritical women are in the Moslim female world a great rarity; indeed they scarcely know the most important doctrines of their religion. Piety in them is even looked upon with dislike.

At mid-day the husband always eats alone, or with his boys or guests. Immediately afterwards, however, the wife again comes into honour since her lord likes to enjoy his siesta in the chambers of the harem. After sunset no respectable woman must show herself outside the house, even though veiled and attended, and now, or some hours later, the husband

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562 [512] again repairs to the sacred apartments of those denied to all but himself.

In the feeling of the Moslim the harems are not citadels of jealousy, in which the husband keeps penned up a considerable flock of luxurious indolent beauties. This representation, so current in the land of the Franks, is spurned by the Oriental with indignation. The women's apartments are [834] rather places sacred and inviolable, where the *harîm* (singular *hurme; hârem* is meaningless), that is "the prohibited," the women, the *family*, and therefore the husband's dearest treasure must be guarded from profane glances and frivolous influences. As above remarked, they are by no means im- [554] prisoned, with the exception perhaps of the women of the highest ranks, they are merely kept and brought up, so that [834] they may shut themselves off by their veils both in the home and outside from all strange men; among themselves they enjoy the freest intercourse. Such a harem existed already [171] among the ancient Greeks under the less hostilely regarded name of *gynaikeion*, and even yet the Greek women are not completely emancipated, and are very strictly looked after. Besides, the native Christian women, at least in Upper Egypt, are even more than those of the Moslim "prohibited." Among the ancient Egyptians, however, they were very free, and went unveiled. In consequence of being thus shut up [184] the oriental women have almost come to form a separate caste, [554] whose laws the men have to respect. This caste has its female sheikhs, for which dignity the midwives and bathing women in particular are selected, has its medical art, its songs and music, its fashions, almost its own language indeed, [195] at least so far as expressions are concerned, and unlimited rule over the little children belonging to it. From the round of its meetings even the master of the house is inexorably excluded. Of course, according to the law, the woman is the [834] servant of the man; she has not the right to sit at a common [264] table with her husband; on the street he shyly avoids his [783] veiled spouse; she is even treated by religion as an object of pollution, contact with which demands a full bath before the believer can again perform his devotions; and when men-

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tion is made of her it is usually accompanied, as in the case of other unclean things, with a "saving your presence" (*esmk Allah*, literally "God honour you"); with regard to inheritance she is regarded as only a half person; she is generally excluded from the mosque, and as a rule is not required to pray, or to know more than is necessary for housekeeping. Still, in the lands of Islam, as well as in the rest of the world, the weaker sex has subjected the stronger in certain fields. Here, too, there are plenty of men who are under petticoat government. The wife is significantly called *sitt*, that is, "mistress," and even the husband calls her so. The wife has even duties to perform towards the outer world in so far as she has to manage the housekeeping. When, in the absence of her husband a guest has to be entertained, meals are served up in the name of the wife through her servants or children, she inquires after the name and health of the guest, but she herself does not appear.

Her sphere of activity is entirely limited to the house, and she fulfils her mission with all the more contentment that the pleasures of the great world are unknown to her. She is not unsusceptible to the attractions of dress and finery—her sex makes this a matter of course—but she has only her husband and her female friends to shine before, and that sets a natural limit to her desires. Her longings do not go beyond her state of half freedom, to which she is accustomed from her youth up, seclusion is not regarded by her as a restraint imposed by the tyrannical men, but as a precept of morality, and a sudden edict of emancipation would at once arouse in the harem itself as much indignation and resistance as a tightening of the reins among the ladies of civilization. It is not to be denied that only in the garden of freedom can a healthy plant thrive, and come to maturity and produce fruit a thousand fold. The greenhouse plant never feels the storm, but it remains weakly and droops at the slightest breath of unaccustomed air that gains entrance from the outside by some crevice. Yet experience teaches that a goodly number of those *open-air garden plants* cannot stand their freedom, and perish if they do not receive strict attention and care.

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THE FAMILY.

837 Mohammed's dictum regarding wine is also true of love—it has many good sides, but also a great many and even more that are bad and dangerous. The Prophet has therefore cut Cupid's wings as well as he could; by the armour of concealment he protected the sexes from the swiftly wounding arrow of the god, and granted to his faithful believers the joys of domestic love in full, perhaps in too full, measure so soon, and to as great an extent as they could do homage to them. Matches are made early, and love's thirst is usually quenched in an orderly and legitimate manner. Fallen [848] virgins, illegitimate children, bachelors, and old maids hardly [589] exist in Mohammedan countries, although there are perhaps more unfaithful wives and husbands, and especially wives who have gone astray and been divorced, than elsewhere. Existing regulations render it difficult for these faithless members of both sexes to meet directly; but this is managed [548] by the herd of procurers and procuresses, who are comparatively numerous in the East, though held in the deepest contempt. "Women contrive to meet their gallants, even [538] though shut up in a box," says the Oriental himself in a very common proverb, as well as in many a tale. Adultery com- [684] mitted by a woman was punished with drowning down to a short time ago; among the ancient Egyptians by cutting off the nose. But the Muselman is proud with regard to the above-mentioned state of matters, and listens with scorn to the statistical revelations made by the states of the West, which suffer from all kinds of moral sores no less than the more dignified "sick man."

595 Nothing shall here be said in approval of polygamy, but to those who have had lengthened opportunities for watching its effects it does not appear as a rule so black as Western imagination is accustomed at a distance to paint it. A thorough panegyric would perhaps show that it even possesses *some advantages on moral grounds*; and in the West also it certainly exists in some social circles. In the East it has prevailed from the earliest times, from the Bedouin to the king,

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even among the patterns of Godfearingness in all times and all countries. Though a man has several wives, that is not a proof of his unbridled sensuality. A man often takes an additional wife because his first one has not presented him with the heirs he longs for—sons in particular—as was the case with the Prophet himself; or matrimonial relationships have become impossible through illness, old age or incompatibility. And it always testifies to some tenderness of feeling when the husband will not put away his first wife or the mother of his children. This step, easy as the law makes it, is resorted to only in exceptional cases, especially if the children are still alive. The great ease with which divorce may be effected is a much weaker side of Mohammedanism, and there are of course a considerable number of dissolute fellows who take advantage of this and do not fill their houses with expensive, scolding, legitimate wives (the number of whom cannot exceed four), but indulge their passions by a change of wares, be they free or slaves. Some men get as far as a fifth wife without ever having had more than one at a time. This does not lower a man in the estimation of the people, if he does not do anything not permitted by religion, though it will be easily understood that such a person is often unsuccessful in his wooings. Any one may keep as many female slaves as he pleases; if one of them has presented him with children, however, the excellent custom that prevails demands that he shall not sell her, still less her children, who according to the law are in all respects legitimate. The father must always maintain the children that any divorced wife has had to him. The question of expense, therefore, forms a beneficial check upon licentiousness, and from this and other reasons it is very common among the higher classes, and among the middle and lower classes almost the rule, for a man to live his whole life long with only a single wife. Unfortunately no statistics are to be had relating to these matters, since the state does not concern itself about matrimonial affairs; these are attended to by the ecclesiastical judge or kadi.

In divorce cases this functionary, after some weak attempts

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586 at reconciliation, has always to give effect to the expressed wish of the husband. The wife also can press for a divorce, and is not, therefore, devoid of all rights; but in this case, besides losing her maintenance, she also, as a rule, loses the [583] jointure that would otherwise fall to be paid to her by the husband as stipulated in the marriage contract. The divorce cannot be judicially forced from the husband, he must say the words "Thou art repudiated," and if he will not do so he has to give his wife a *bêt shêr 'ai*, that is, a separate dwelling and maintenance; it is a kind of divorce *a mensa et thoro*. [587] During the continuance of this relationship the woman cannot marry again, though of course the husband can. But during the proceedings, with which a multitude of laymen, both summoned and unsummoned, mix themselves up, the husband often becomes morally pliant, or is induced by cunning to utter the words, whereupon the case at once comes to an end. The phrase "thou art repudiated" is fatally momentous, the mere utterance of it, even in the heat of a quarrel, results in separation, and "thrice repudiated" even in complete divorce (see below). If a person writes these words down and in joke asks a Mohammedan to read them, he absolutely refuses to read them aloud. The asseveration "by repudiation," or stronger "by threefold repudiation," is equivalent to a solemn oath. The greater number of disputes in cases of matrimonial separation arise on account of the children, whom neither the father nor mother would like to part with. They, together with the matter of expense, are what unites most closely the bonds of marriage, otherwise so loose. Up to a certain age, which differs among the various so-called sects of Mohammedans—among the Hanafites, for instance, being the seventh year, among the Shafaites [595] the second—the child remains with its mother, while the father pays for its support, and in return has the right of seeing it as often as he wishes. Henceforth the father, if he has satisfactorily supported it hitherto, can take the child altogether to himself, and he usually does so if it is a boy.

[587] The divorced wife returns to her parents, who generally soon succeed in finding another settlement for her. In a

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great many cases the separation is only temporary, the husband and wife make up their quarrel and come together again without any farther formalities than the consent of the kadi. When the severest form of divorce has been pronounced, however, namely, with the formula of threefold repudiation, a reunion becomes not such an easy matter. For such cases there exists the well known and peculiar law of the *mostahill* (literally "permission-maker"). A third person has formally to marry the divorced woman and put her away again, whereupon the husband can again take back his former wife. Men who are endowed with the minimum of personal advantages are usually selected to act as these middle men, and they are paid for their welcome services. Cases of this sort are certainly rare, being considered disgraceful. It sometimes happens also that the pair joined in this momentary marriage take each other's fancy, the intermediary will not give up the woman joined to him, and no power can tear them asunder if they do not wish it. The law just mentioned is said to be founded on the awakening of jealousy.

The man of the middle and lower ranks who has more than one wife usually has his harem, with children and attendants, in different houses, or in different portions of the same house specially constructed for the purpose; and in order to give satisfaction to all parties, a good polygamous husband eats and sleeps in regular alternation, the one day in the house of one wife, the next in that of another. These look upon themselves as relatives, and from time to time pay each other at least ceremonial visits. Indeed there are a great many examples of several wives living together peacefully, obediently, and free from jealousy. Of quarrels arising from jealousy much less is heard than one would have beforehand assumed. By his supreme powers the husband maintains order, and jealousy frequently takes even the form of a praiseworthy struggle how each wife may appear more amiable in the eyes of her husband than her rivals. Most women give up from the first the idea of requiring their husband to remain true to them, and jealous women are even laughed at by their female friends. The ideal romantic love

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595 [83] is never felt by the Oriental; he condemns it, and knows only the natural sensual love, and the noblest and most practical, the love of a husband, often very true and deep. Among the ancient Egyptians monogamy alone seems to have been practised; on the other hand marriages between brothers and sisters were allowed.

593 To the modern Egyptians, the monogamous Copts, as well as the polygamous Mohammedans, kind-hearted and full of feeling as they are, lively family affections are not to be denied. The members of a family usually cling tenderly to each other; to them a foreign country is equivalent to misery, and a lengthy separation a misfortune. Veneration is deeply, to us as it often seems almost tyrannically, impressed upon children. In the presence of a father it would be disrespectful to smoke, to sit, and to speak more than is necessary. If [594] there are guests the son does not eat with them but serves, [264] it is only by the special desire of a guest that he joins the party. The younger brother has to behave in a similar manner towards his elder. Where circumstances permit, and 596 especially therefore in the country, all the members of the 888 family up to old age inhabit a common dwelling, living in patriarchal style. The old father or mother, no longer able to work, lives with the vigorous son, and free from care awaits the end; and additional children, instead of being [842] looked on as a burden, are welcomed by parents as a blessing from Heaven, which thus bestows on them so many additional 165 supporters. Living the simple and temperate life they do, great ages are common; according to the statements of the people 90 to 100 years are no rarity, but these reports are not to be depended on, since scarcely anybody knows the day or even the year of his birth. Early marriages being the rule, [582] generations follow each other so rapidly that it is not rare for the great-great-grandfather to see his great-great-grandson.

593 The idyllic patriarchal life of union is on the whole the rule, but there are also many exceptions. Here as elsewhere there are cruel mothers, shrews, ungrateful children, brothers at deadly enmity, scolding mothers-in-law, husbands that beat their wives, wives that beat their husbands.

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FRIDAY.

The week is over, and on the eve of Friday the muezzin proclaims, by a variation in words and melody, the day of the Lord, which begins at this hour, and consequently on Thursday evening. But neither now nor yet next morning does any change in the physiognomy of the working day manifest itself. The retail-dealer sits in his shop, the artisan knocks and hammers, the broker shouts, the countryman brings his fruits as at other times, it is but a very few that have even changed their clothes. Towards mid-day the muezzin calls repeatedly, not as at other times only once, and now the town assumes a remarkably deserted appearance, in the streets and market-places only idle boys make a stir, the whole grown-up male population hurry to the mosques. Here, sitting in rows upon the ground, the congregation listen to the exhortations of the uneducated lay-preacher in the pulpit, who but a short time ago sat in his shop and wove or worked at his trade of tailor or carpenter, while the attendants on a platform chant formulas in confirmation of his words. A short half hour and the whole service, the sermon of the preacher, his official supplication, and the genuflections of the worshippers, are at an end. The remainder of the day is also devoted to ordinary occupations, the Prophet having so permitted. Only the schools and the public offices remain closed.

As with the Friday so with many other days held sacred by the Mohammedans; the uninitiated is often made aware of them only by means of slices of bread and butter, which a friendly neighbour sends to the house, or, as at the Ashoora, by a kind of cosmopolitan cake, consisting of flour, wheat, barley, walnuts, hazel-nuts, raisins, rose-perfume, cinnamon, ginger, and all other possible fruits and spices.

RAMADAN.

But now comes the month of fasting—the sacred *Ramadan*. On the evening of the day preceding the first of this month

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796 the people begin to be in an active and excited state. Numerous groups collect in the open spaces and scan the
[827] western horizon to see if they can discover the new moon; since it is only on the testimony of a Moslim that he has seen the new moon—though he may be a man of no account whatever—that the festival can begin. Even the most accurate astronomical calculation, so far as this is possible, has not the same authority. The rising and setting of the new as well as of the full moon are not regulated exactly by those of the sun, since the synodic or lunar month contains 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes, and the time of conjunction, when moon, earth, and sun are in a right line, happens at very different hours of the day in different months. The time at which the new moon, so eagerly looked for by the Mohammedans, first reappears after astronomical new-moon also depends upon the season of the year; it is seen earliest in the spring months, for reasons depending upon the position of the moon's path relatively to that of the sun. An astronomer says that he has not seen the moon earlier than forty hours after nor later than twenty-seven hours before the astronomical new-moon, but that by a combination of all favourable circumstances this may even happen within twenty-four hours, and travellers maintain that they have seen the old moon on the morning and the new moon on the evening of the same day. To these considerations one is led who every year looks on, while the Moslimin thus eagerly and for the most part uselessly watch the heavens. Since the official calendar pays no attention to this important
[805] method of determining Ramadan, it simply gives, now to one month, now to another, thirty or twenty-nine days in order to make up the total of 354. Accordingly, when the first of Ramadan occurs in the calendar, it is by no means certain whether at the same time the new moon is visible. The more scientific among the heads of the province often actually cause the fast to be altered a day till the moon is perfectly visible in the evening sky. When Ramadan falls in winter, at which season the sky is often clouded, and in high latitudes, where it is gloomy for weeks at a time, the determina-

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tion of Ramadan is attended with still greater difficulties. 796
In modern times, however, the inhabitants of the province are informed by telegraph from the capital, when the new moon became visible there, and that generally at a time before even the most sharp-sighted among the country people could descry anything. [206]

So soon as it is believed to be certain that the new moon has appeared, in towns where there are cannon a loud report proclaims the commencement of the fast, and from this moment the Moslim becomes quite a changed man. Henceforward he leads more of a nocturnal life. In the morning during the fast only a few persons belonging to the lowest classes are seen, as in the large towns of Europe; porters, water-carriers, day-labourers, ass and camel drivers, go to their occupations; the children, who are not expected to fast, and the infidels have possession of the streets; the markets and cafés are deserted, the shops and offices shut. Gradually a person here and there rises, and, with eyelids weighed down by sleep, crawls languidly along, and the shops begin to open. Such things as are absolutely necessary are bought, but trade remains extremely dull, and when a person asks to see some goods the shop-keeper sulkily lays aside the Koran, which he had been conning over to himself aloud, moving his head to and fro, and scarcely deigns to give the customer a single glance. "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast" (Mat. vi. 16). 785 796 [207] [243]

In the forenoon nature makes herself felt as being deprived of her proper night's rest; from noon onwards hunger and thirst also demand to be appeased. Not a bite, not a sup, not an odour must enter the body that is clad in the armour of fasting. The most exquisite dainties would not be able to seduce a fasting Moslim. When he passes an infidel who is smoking he carefully shuts both mouth and nose, and it is not many years yet since any one who dared to smoke before a fasting Moslim would have suffered for it. Unless he is very unwell (and then he is freed from fasting) a Mohammedan takes no medicine during the day, he even refuses to

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785 796 allow an eye-lotion to be dropped upon his sore eyes, and the doctor may as well desist at once from attempting a regular treatment during this month. Anointing the head, bathing, 783 cleaning out the ears, and even looking into a mirror, are 785 also considered sinful by some. It need scarcely be men- 1796 tioned that matrimonial duties, were it even a kiss, are excluded from the labours of the day. Perjury, stealing, and lying are trifles compared with the deadly sin of cooling the parched tongue with a single drop of water during a day in Ramadan. Ramadan is the touch-stone of the true Moslim, and there are very few who openly at least venture to break the fast. Even the women, who know nothing more of their [562] religion than the words Mohammed, paradise, hell-fire, and [34] unbelievers, fast likewise (though not in all places); if their menses intervene, however, they become unclean, and fasting then becomes sinful. A person who is sick and travelling does not require to fast, and can make up for lost time on another occasion.

785 796 The nearer evening approaches the more does the traffic on the street increase. It is comical to see the eagerness with which the faster awaits the minute that allows him again the wished-for refreshment. One man, for instance, may be seen standing with a live coal held above the newly-filled bowl of his pipe, another holds a piece of date-bread or a cup of coffee an inch from his mouth. The cannon roars, and the [702] dainty is at once bolted. As the thunder of the cannon clears off the clouds from the face of the sky, so does it cheer up the gloomy lenten-visages of the sons of Islam. The streets 796 again become empty, since at home there is already an abun- 264 dant repast prepared; of fat mutton, and many other varieties of dishes, of spices, and sweets of all kinds, there is abundance at the tables of the rich; while the man of the lower classes, who can seldom afford to buy meat at other seasons of the year, has been saving up for months in order to give himself the gratification of a good evening "breakfast" during Ramadan. It is a good custom among the rich to have a [574] guest at this meal, and one is often taken in off the street. [735] Nor does the poor beggar at this time go empty away.

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Thus strengthened it is possible for the Moslim in his nocturnal devotions to perform the twenty systems of reverential bendings (*rák'a*) now demanded instead of the usual three. On the streets there is not to be sure a surging of people up and down, and there are also but a few of the dealers or artisans' shops opened, but a bustle and traffic at other times unusual on the street at night may still be noticed; numerous sellers of fruits, and especially of confectionery, have lighted up their stations, and, till far into the night, cry their wares, now so largely patronised by young and old; the café's are all well attended, and if one pleases he can now get here besides the black bitter coffee sweetened coffee or a cup of ginger water with sugar, and sometimes also sherbet of rose-water, tamarinds, raisins, St. John's bread, or, lastly, a drop of liquorice juice. A "poet" relates to the by-standers the deeds of the hero Abuset or Antar, sometimes bursting out into song, and accompanying himself by scraping on a one stringed fiddle. In another café a master of music twangs with all the rapidity of a virtuoso the innumerable treble strings of a kind of guitar, and draws from it those weak jingling tones which recall to us our boyhood and the time when we received our first music lessons on the dingy-keyed piano of a country schoolmaster. There the guests listen to a story-teller; with voluble tongue and poetic verse he describes the enchanted princes and princesses, the excursions of the disguised Haroun al Rashid and his viziers, the man-eating monsters, the Jewish enchanters, which form the material for every one of those tales, the number of which is far more than 1001. The narrative is extempore —purely from memory.

In the houses matters proceed in the same way or even with more liveliness. Everybody who has a house to offer "prepares a couch" (*yfrish*) in order to receive guests, and treats them to coffee. On such evenings the merriest humour prevails, and at no time the whole year through does the Moslim appear in such a hearty vein as on the nights of Ramadan. He goes from one house to another and makes a round of calls upon his friends and acquaintances. In

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order to add life to an entertainment gentlemen often send for singers, instrumentalists, and dancers, the last of whom are generally in great request on the evenings of this month. The religious element is represented by a schoolmaster who recites the Koran in another room, and who is expressly hired for the month, or an educated slave or a son may perform this office. Other feasts, such as circumcisions or marriages, are never celebrated in the sacred month. Sittings of the courts are commonly held and the more important official business performed at night. It is not till towards midnight that quietness prevails; the muezzin calls, and soon after, a cry is heard and a warning shot sounds over the town intimating that it is time to prepare for the last meal. If any person has failed to notice this he is warned by individuals who about this time wander singly through the town from house to house beating a drum. The "vigil-meal" consists of the remains of the principal meal warmed up, or of meat fried with butter and articles made of flour, such as are at other times prepared for breakfast. Two hours after the boom of the cannon is again heard, the fast has to begin and along with it the same routine. Such is the sacred month of Ramadan, the great month of fasting and also of feasting, for which the women during the following month sing songs of regret as if for a loved one departed.

THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE FEAST.

In the three following days of the next month, Shaual, the "Little Feast," the "Little Bairam" of the Turks, is celebrated. It begins, as every day does, in the evening. The women have made ready bread and butter and sugar-cakes, the men dress themselves in their best, and the barbers are occupied till late at night in attending to their customers. On this evening three cannon shots proclaim that the fast has now come to an end. After supper everybody goes early to bed, but before sunrise all the men are in the mosque offering up their feast-day prayers, and listening to the feast-day sermon, which does not last much longer

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than the Friday's ceremony. This day's breakfast[1] the first for a month, consists, if possible, of fresh or salted fish, with all kinds of fruits and delicacies, in order that the body may be gradually accustomed to its usual course of life. People appear in their holiday clothes, and the shops are shut. On this day shirts covered with a year's dirt are exchanged for brand-new garments even among the poorest, gay silken stuffs infold those parts and members of the body that were previously exposed, costly cloths flutter round the head, and the cheerful colours of the bright red, bright yellow, green, and blue coats show vividly in the morning sun. The little girls, who are allowed to run about the streets and markets only on rare occasions, on this day flutter about like brilliant butterflies through the whole town, in their fire-red clothes, their faces carefully painted and touched up, and their persons hung with ornaments of gold and silver. A nameless joy beams in and from out the heart of everybody. No longer is there any enemy, any hateful unbeliever; high and low are all one, the whole citizens embrace each other—liberty, equality, fraternity. A round of visits is made from house to house; officials and people of the higher ranks give a very imposing reception, and everybody wishes everybody else a happy new year, though the new year will not come for three months yet. After the visitor has embraced his host round the neck, bending over his right and his left shoulder, coffee, and sherbet are brought, or the half-fermented native beer made from barley, and called *buza*. Everybody serving another in any capacity on this day receives from his master a money present or at least a new garment. The women also adorn themselves and hold receptions for each other, but this is done to a greater extent on the following day, as they have too much to do on the first day in preparing liquors for the male guests. Any other kind of work is out of the question. The remaining portion of such holidays passes quietly, the chief times of the day being proclaimed by the reports of a cannon as well as by the muezzin. As early, however, as the second day of the feast some persons who are eager after business open their shops and buy and sell;

[1] [i.e., following the fast of Ramadan—analyst]

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796 [169] while those who have lost some one dear to them recall him or her to their thoughts, proceed to the cemetery (especially the women), stick a palm branch into the grave mound, distribute pastry and alms, and even pass the night there with their family.

The other feast follows three months after. It is called the Great Feast or Feast of Offering, and lasts for four days, but is really the smaller feast. The baking, cannon-firing, receiving of visitors, embracing, congratulating, and dressing go on as at the little feast; the festive gaiety is, however, dulled, and is not so universal as after the Ramadan. The chief ceremony [182] on this occasion is the eating of "offering flesh" in memory of the offering of Abraham. Every believer *must* have his [262] piece of meat on this day, and anyone who cannot procure it for himself receives it from his richer neighbours, each of whom offers a sheep for every member of his family. The native Christians abstain from flesh on this day out of opposition. [188] This is the most brilliant period of the pilgrimage in Mecca.

FEAST OF THE SAINTS.

796 796 In the middle of the month Shaaban, which precedes Ramadan, is celebrated the great annual jubilee (a kind of wakes), when every town that can claim to have had a saint of any note, having chosen him as its patron, honours his memory by some kind of festive demonstration—the saint having been a man gifted by God with miraculous power, not necessarily on account of great piety, but oftener as a compensation for harmless and innocent imbecility. The [114] ancient Egyptians also had their patrons and protectors, namely, special divinities or forms and varieties of such for 796 particular cities. In Upper Egypt the chief festival is that [184] of the Sheikh Abder-Rahim at Keneh; it is for Upper Egypt what the celebrated fair at Tantah is for Lower Egypt. The latter is evidently a continuation of the ancient Egyptian feast of Diana at Bubastis, or is analogous to it. From the beginning [178] of the month onwards some bustle prevails round the temple

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or mausoleum of the sheikh, as the saint is called, booths and tents are erected, and the spot where he is buried is crowded with devout visitors. At night the halls of the mausoleum are lighted up, all the lamps above the tomb being lighted; the citizens crowd to the spot, listen to the reading of the Koran, and give themselves up to the intoxication of the *zikr*, a kind of religious dance which will be described afterwards. Coffee and sherbet are served out in the booths, and dancing-girls, singers, and instrumental performers attract the people, the stalls of the dealers in fruits and confectionery extend far into the city; all the shopkeepers have provided large supplies of goods; foreign traders expose their commodities; the festival assumes the appearance of a fair. The nearer the feast the greater the throng of people that assembles from far and near. Every hour brings more new-comers, many of whom advance in solemn procession, horsemen and flags in front, with drums, musical instruments, and women behind, who express in a melancholy chant their longing regards towards the sainted sheikh, or utter quavers of joy. The flags and the sheep that are dragged along in the procession are intended as offerings for the saint, in fulfilment of a vow made for a prayer granted in the course of the year. When the attendants of the sheikh, as sacrificial priests, have taken as much as they want, the remainder is divided among the struggling people.

At the place where the festival is held boys and youths amuse themselves on a large swing, the smaller and the girls enjoy a kind of see-saw on the level unused area of the graveyard the equestrian performers go through their manœuvres. Clad in a wide flowing blouse, with the sleeves thrown far back, their feet planted on the broad flat stirrups, as they sit in their saddles that rise into a high pommel before and behind, holding upright in their hands a long pole, these performers ride at full speed, one after the other, from one row of people to the opposite. They display their dexterity by suddenly stopping their flying horses when close beside the frightened crowd, in accomplishing which their pole serves as a support, and by raising the dust in clouds causes their daring to be visible to a distance.

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000 their daring to be visible to a distance. The people on the
541 festival ground take up their positions in a number of circles,
in the centre of which performers of all sorts show themselves. Here a silver-haired wise woman or female sheikh
[538] sings rousing religious hymns; there the listening people get
[231] stories of genii and of heroes told to them; here the monkey-keeper puts his red-buttocked baboon through his performances, making him show "the maiden's sleep and that of the old wife, the walk of the thief," &c.; there a group of impro-
[538] visators are bawling and clapping their hands, ready at a moment's notice to make a verse for and upon every new
[522] comer. Elsewhere a buffoon is giving amusement by his
536 gestures in theatrical representations, and his wit, which is
[789] coarse, generally obscene, and exceedingly personal. A juggler stuffs his mouth full of cotton and draws out endless ribbons instead. These he winds up together, then shuts them into his magical box, opens the box, and discovers it to be empty. He then summons the magic spirit to his assistance by
[231] blowing a large shell (generally that of *Tritonium variegatum*), opening the box again and a large serpent crawls out of it. In the meantime he goes through all sorts of antics with his boys and assistants. One of these robs him, but the thief is discovered and condemned to death. The juggler bares the culprit's belly, into which he forcibly thrusts a dagger, and in order that death may be certain, he withdraws and inserts it several times. A stream of blood spurts out, and the performance is too real and horrible for some spectators. The corpse is covered up, the magic shell is blown, the spirit awakes the boy, who gradually moves his limbs, and soon jumps about as merry as before. The handle of the dagger, as the police have learned, is hollow, and the blade is pushed up into it when brought into contact with the skin, while at the same time a bladder applied to the dagger gives out a stream of blood-red beet-root juice.

796 On the morning of the festival itself, as upon all the great general festivals of Islam, town and people are decorated and dressed out, work is entirely at a stand-still, and the throng upon the main streets leading to the tomb of the saint is

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immense. The town contains twice or thrice as many strangers as inhabitants, and these are all on foot. Camels behung with coloured cloths, ribbons, carpets, and bells, carry the *mahmel* or "ark" of the tutelary saint, which is covered with the grave-cloth embroidered in gold and silver; the main part of this mahmel, a quadrangular wooden frame with a pyramidal top, may be seen at other times on the roof of the sheikh's building. The anniversary of other saints is also occasionally celebrated at the same time, and each has his mahmel. These processions have an unmistakable similarity to those that took place at the clothing of the statues of the ancient Egyptian deities. When the camels are collected the procession starts. The advanced guard is formed by a large number of swift camels, whose riders, sitting upon rich housings, and themselves decked with gay garments, gallop backwards and forwards and display their dexterity. Others show their horses' action, while boys strive to get their donkeys to gallop. Pipers and kettle-drummers head the procession itself. (it is only the military that have drums and trumpets proper), then comes the chorus of day and night watchmen, followed by the Turkish soldiers and police-officials in full regimentals. This armed body keeps up a perpetual fire, loading their old-fashioned guns and pistols to the muzzle. In their midst rides the governor of the province or his representative on a richly caparisoned steed, the procession being joined also, when possible, by a squadron of Bashi Bazouks or irregular troops, and a company of regular troops of the line. The camels with the mahmels, each led by a man, form the middle of the festal procession. Under the frames of the mahmels peep out boys and girls who have been elevated to this blessed seat, either in virtue of their rank, or by the recommendations of their fathers. Before every camel a body of men dance and sing pious odes, hymns and verses of the Koran; gay flags consecrated to the sheikh are carried alongside of the camel. Behind follow more musicians, and after them dancing-girls, who are indispensable even to such pious solemnities, and are believed not to have a disturbing effect upon the devotion appropriate to

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the festival. Upon a wheeled conveyance, and adorned with flags and ribbons, a small boat is pulled along, the property of the saint, and at other times hung up in his mausoleum. In it he is said to have from time to time made journeys by sea and river. The end of the procession is formed by camels bearing huge kettle-drums, which the rider belabours with a mighty drum-stick. Behind these, lastly, comes the crowd of people extending as far as the eye can reach. Thus they march away, often to some spot leagues distant in the desert, and after making the round of the town appear before the serail of the governor. This solemn moment, which does not take place till towards evening, is proclaimed by the thunder of ordnance. At some places the firing takes place at the start of the procession. With the replacing of the arks in the temple of their sainted owners the festivities come to an end, and next morning all the people are again in their working clothes.

EASTER WEEK.

It is remarkable that the bigoted Mohammedans celebrate, at least in Egypt, some days in common with the native Christians, though certainly in a peculiar and by no means Christian manner. To these belong especially the days about Easter. On Palm Sunday (*hael el chus*) the women bind palm twigs round their heads and fingers. On the Monday following people eat *fugus* (a kind of cucumber) along with caraway; on Tuesday, whey with onions, this day being accordingly called "whey and onion day" (*yum el mish u el basal*). The Wednesday is universally known by the name of Job's Wednesday (*arba Ayub*). On this day the plant *ghubeyra* (*Inula arabica?*) said to Job in his illness, "Wash thyself with my juice, and thou wilt recover," he did recover, and on this day it is customary for all the Egyptians to wash themselves with the *gharghurah Ayub*. Maunday Thursday has become "pea-Thursday." Good Friday is called among the Mohammedans, "cake and butter Friday" (*yum'a el mufruka*), cakes spread with butter and honey being the special dainty on this day.

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special dainty on this day. Saturday is named "the Sabbath of the light," from the celebrated sacred fire, which on this day bursts forth in the Greek Church of the Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and on this account the Christian brethren there annually get up a spectacle, which often terminates in deadly blows and renders the intervention of the Turkish, and consequently Mohammedan soldiery necessary. On this day the Mohammedan faithful strengthen their eyes with eye-powders; everybody has a vein opened, or gets himself cupped, a custom which prevails in many places in the West also, and in Egypt, Mohammedan as it is, coloured Easter eggs are also eaten. People take *kishk*, that is, a decoction of wheat with sourmilk, boil it with eggs, and stick it with the coloured shells of the eggs above the doors to adorn the entrance for all time coming and ward off spirits. On Easter Sunday the "great feast of the Christians" (*id en-nusdra*) these hold a grand reception, with sherbet and holiday gifts, the Mohammedans in a friendly and neighbourly way call upon the Christians as the latter did upon them during Bairam. The Easter Monday of the Copts, whose festivals are settled by the Greek calendar, is the universal spring festival for the adherents of both religions. The night before onions, beans, and a bouquet of roses are laid under the bed-cushions and slept upon. On Easter Monday the onions are crushed and stuck with some water on the door; the beans are stuck on the bar, and the roses are used as a nosegay. At the first streak of daylight everybody moves abroad, this being the day of *shimm en-nesim*, that is, "air-smelling," or more poetically "sipping the zephyr." People go to the gardens or other attractive spots, and pass, if possible, the whole day there. At the most-frequented places sellers of coffee, sherbet, buza, and cooked meats establish themselves. A company of friends may take an Easter lamb with them, kill it at the rendezvous they have selected, and prepare *tanur*, that is, they cut up the meat in several pieces and bake it in an improvised earth-oven; or they make *shauirma*, that is, the whole lamb with the skin and hair on is placed on a spit and roasted at the fire. The day is spent

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796 [521] [526] in conversation, ball playing, and gymnastic exercises, and those whose conscience allows it smell the contents of their dram-bottle as well as the fresh air and roast meat. Health must be inhaled to-day since the five days' period of terror, 753 796 [796] the time of the *chamasin*, is now at hand. A serpent then wanders over the earth and infects the atmosphere with its poisonous breath, leaving behind small-pox, plague, cholera ("the yellow wind"), and all other varieties of disease. The curse is not removed till Whitsuntide dissolves it.

THE NIGHT OF THE DROP.

796 823 On the 17th of June a "drop" falls (according to the ancients a tear of Isis) into the decreasing waters of the Nile, and impregnates the wonderful stream. Its effect is soon after observed in the dirtier colour of the water, then in its more rapid flow, and lastly in its increase and overflow. On this day, or on the night, the "night of the drop," young and old flock to the banks of the blessed stream.

THE NERUS DAY.

541 On the 10th September, the first day of the Coptic solar year, the river has reached to about its highest point, and on this day—the *nerûs*, the people give themselves up to the pleasures of the carnival. For three days it is all up with the rule of the Turks; every little town chooses for itself in its own way, and from its own midst, a ruler (*abu nerus*), who has a towering fool's cap set upon his head, and a long spectral board of flax fastened to his chin, and is clothed in a peculiar garment. With a long sceptre in his hand, and followed by a crowd of correspondingly-dressed bailiffs, hangmen, and scribes, he promenades the streets and turns his steps straight to the hall of the chief magistrate. Every one bends before him, the guards at the door make way, the governor of the province or of the town has the humour to let himself be ousted, while the new dignitary seats himself on his throne and holds a most rigorous criminal investiga-

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tion, from which even the displaced functionary and his abettors do not escape. The hangman's assistant of yesterday is sentenced to be hanged, the bastinadoer to be beaten, the *kashkatib* or chief secretary to imprisonment, immense taxes are imposed, and all decisions are set down on a sheet of paper. There is no pardon for the condemned unless on the payment of a few piasters as backshish. Thus they move from house to house, the taxes being levied in the form of backshish. Three days does the capricious rule of the ephemeral tyrant last; at length he, that is his dress, is condemned to death by burning, and from the ashes creeps out the slavish Fellah. In the times of good-natured Mohammed Ali the abu nerus is said to have ventured even to approach his throne, but the harmless jest has now fallen a good deal out of practice. The ancients also celebrated feasts when the Nile was at its height, in the month of Tût, as, for instance, that of Hermes on the 10th of this month. The anniversary of the opening of the canal is kept only at Cairo.

BIRTH-DAY CEREMONIES.

The monotony of the work-day life of the Mohammedan, interrupted by no Sunday, is richly and agreeably varied by domestic ceremonies and observances. However thrifty or niggardly he usually is, on such occasions he spares no expense.

When the time comes that a child is to see the light the midwife makes her appearance with her seat, and displays the greatest activity on behalf of her suffering charge; female relatives and neighbours also come in crowds to encourage and advise. It is often sought to lighten the difficult task by hanging opium about the mother, or making her eat the drug. The newly-born child is merely dried, not washed, and immediately laid upon a corn sieve; beside its head lies the knife with which the umbilical cord has been cut, and corn is scattered round about. This procedure is intended to drive away the *karina*, that is, the child's evil brother or sister from the spirit realm that always makes its appearance and tor-

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844 ments the poor child of humanity till it sickens and falls
[916] into convulsions, which are therefore also called karina (see
[953] chap. vii.). Immediately after the birth the mother receives
melted butter with honey and fenugreek, and instead of
[962] fasting she must daily eat at least a fowl or a good piece of
meat, which her female friends and neighbours give her. On
846 the sixth day the mother in her turn sends these a plate of
kishk (decoction of wheat and sour milk) as a sign that they
are invited for the following day. Above the head of the
sleeping child is placed on this night a pitcher, hung with
[989] gold coins and lighted with tapers, the pitcher being long-
necked (*dowlk*) in the case of boys, short-necked (*kullek*) in
that of girls.

846 On the morning of the seventh day (*yum es-subû'a*) the
852 house is filled with female visitors. The child is placed upon
a sieve, tapers are fixed upon metal plates and on the point
of a sword, and the child is carried in procession through the
whole house, while the midwife scatters *bisle*, that is, wheat,
[782] barley, pease, and salt as provender for the wicked spirits.
[916] The child is shaken in the sieve, being thereby believed to
lose fear for the rest of its life, and its eyes are held up to
the sun to sharpen them. The cymbals and small drums,
the singing and trilling of the women, make the outer world
acquainted with the joy within the house. The guests present
[931] the mother and midwife with money and gold, for which
[962] they distribute parched chick-peas, St. John's bread, and
walnuts.

But the father must also keep the seventh day as a festival, especially if the child is a boy, though in many cases he does not dare up till this time to look upon his own child, since he might possibly, and quite against his will, do some harm to his tender offspring by a glance of his eye. He invites his friends to a feast, and entertains them with Koran reading, zikrs, and similar pious amusements, or sends for instrumental players, singers, and dancing-girls. The son is brought in a sieve and shown to the guests, who rejoice with the father,
[931] and perhaps also leave some gifts. A plate of candy-sugar
[953] is now sent to the kadi or some other theologian; he sucks

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it, and lets the sweet fluid trickle from his consecrated mouth into that of the child, and "gives him the name out of his mouth." This is accordingly a kind of baptism. It is well known that among the Moslim, as among the native Christians, and till lately among the Jews of the West, only personal (and not family) names are used even in public life. For distinction the personal name of one's father is joined to one's own name, as Mohammed Soliman, that is, Mohammed, son of Soliman. Many have of course a surname, but it is generally personal, as for instance, the Bald, the One-eyed, the Falcon, and so forth, and only in rare cases is retained as a family name. In recent times the desire of acquiring a family name is showing itself, especially among government officials. This custom has of course the advantage that it leaves no room for pride of noble or patrician descent. Only the descendants of the prophets, the *sherifs*, of whom there are millions, pride themselves on their birth, and generally marry only among themselves. Still more the Bedouin, who is said to be able to repeat his pedigree in personal names alone up to Abraham and Adam, like the genealogies in the Bible, and who knows the pedigree of his horse equally well.

On the fortieth day after childbirth the mother goes with the child to the bath, and gets forty dishfuls of water poured over her head if her offspring is a boy, and thirty-nine if it is a girl. The child also is now bathed for the first time, and mother and child are now clean and purified.

CEREMONIES PRELIMINARY TO FAMILY FESTIVALS.

The more important family festivals, as a circumcision or a marriage, are often preceded by a whole round of preliminary ceremonies that last for weeks, or even months, and take place every evening. The master of the house prides himself in giving a feast that will be long spoken of. Every evening he gathers together his friends in his hospitable dwelling, and provides for them amusements and entertainments of every form and kind. At present chess, draughts, dominoes, and other games are played, but not for money, or at most for a

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527 524 [379] [473] trifle, since games of chance are strictly forbidden by the Mohammedan religion, as well as wine and fermented liquors generally. The loser is often jeered, and has his forehead stamped with his own seal as a mark of disgrace; but if he then beats his opponent the latter has to wipe off the mark with his own robe, and is marked by the other.

527 [533] [535] Next day a grand *Fantasie* is held (a general name given by the Arabs to an entertainment where anything merry is to be seen or heard) in the form of a dance with music and singing. Such an entertainment has little resemblance to a Frankish ball, which has accordingly preserved its own special name of *bals*. In the court, or the space in front of the house, even though this be the street, carpets and straw mats are spread, benches are placed, and many-branched candelabra and brilliant paper lanterns or oil-lamps with coloured water are suspended above the scene of the nocturnal festivities. Soon after night-prayer everybody flocks to the spot, high and low, young and old, invited and uninvited. A number [354] of dancing-girls step up. They take off their street mantles 527 535 and display themselves in their richest attire, from the gold-[292] [301] embroidered skull-cap, and gold trinkets round the neck and over the heart, to the silken bows upon the polished boots; but on such a public occasion there is no impropriety. The dancing-girls of the ancient Egyptians appear to have worn a very transparent dress; they also are often represented as quite naked; even the short skirts of the modern ballet-girl are seen in some representations. The hair of our dancing-[302] girls smoothed, oiled, and plaited, their dotted faces, their rich and gaudy dresses—all is faultless. The childish forms even to have become filled out, the haggard faces under the mystic half light of the illumined darkness and the effects of the "Joseph's beauty" (rouge) have recovered their youthful freshness; the really pretty have become charming. The 533 orchestra has already taken up its position on the ground; 534 some gray-bearded fathers are strumming on the two strings 527 of their spindle-shaped fiddles; a jolly musician blows the reed-clarionet; matrons with buckram voices sing to plaintive tunes, beat hand kettle-drums and swing cymbals or tam-

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lourines with jingling metal plates attached. Or a genuine young singing-girl (an *almeh*) has been sent for, often also a singing-boy. With elevated necks they rise up to the highest regions of the tenor, always despising, however, the feminine region of the falsetto voice; anon they let their voices sink deeper and deeper with the most delicate swells and modulations, but seldom venture down into the bass voice. All sing together in the same key; harmony is unknown, monologues and recitative choruses being generally sung. Rapid shading is strictly avoided, and, accordingly, the Arab derives no pleasure from European music, regarding it as disagreeable and ridiculous, or at best remains indifferent to it, as something foreign. From time to time modulations occur which suspend the expected close. The sound now dies away like the stroke of a bell trembling through the stormy air. A sudden outburst of ecstasy begins a new period, the most delightful sounds of which are uttered through the nose. Allah! Allah! shout the people in rapturous enthusiasm, and the singing-girls, encouraged by the applause, sing still more delightfully, the kettle-drums and other instruments become louder and stormier.

At such moments rise the dancing-girls, the celebrated *bayaderes* of Egypt, commonly called *ghawâzi* (not *almeh*, which means a singing-girl). Only a few of these form an artistic conception of their parts, and represent in pantomime the common history of a love affair—pursuit, coyness at first, victory, and lastly, entire self-abandonment. Their much-admired dances are, however, generally quite inartistic, having no regular figures, no keeping of time, no combined movements. In dancing the girl skips backwards and forwards before the spectators, raises the arms, clatters

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535 the inevitable castanets (like the crotali of the ancients),
527 and casts around coquettish glances. Whatever of art is
[534] displayed consists in movements of the trunk and hips—impossible to imitate—the limbs being almost at rest. Occasionally the girl moves slowly round in a circle, gives a slight hop, perhaps swings a sword, and sinks gradually to the ground balancing a small cup on her forehead, or whirls herself round sitting on a narrow-mouthed pitcher. Yet the public are enthusiastic to the highest degree about those female performers, a popularity which no doubt they owe more to their affability than to their artistic skill, since they joke with everybody and everybody with them without any embarrassment. But dancing is given up entirely to them, and if any one were to catch them round the waist, *ala Franka*, and dance round in a galop with them, he would bring abuse and disgrace on himself, and would be set down as crazy. It is a modern and Frankish custom for members of both sexes to dance together in close contact, and such a practice was also unknown to classical antiquity. The Oriental loves dancing and music, but seldom cultivates them in person, getting people who practise these arts as their profession to perform for his entertainment; and their profession is never held in esteem, but is regarded as degrading, like that of an actor in the Frankish middle ages. For
533 a grown-up man of the better class to sing by himself, or
[538] merely to join in with others, or even to amuse himself on a musical instrument, is regarded as undignified, and still more for ladies. At such *fantasias* the representatives of religion,
527 the kadis and ulema, do not fail to be present, and laugh
793 heartily even at obscenities. The priests of ancient Egypt, as also the severe Socrates, saw no harm in having music and dancing in their houses; they even practised music themselves. The higher ranks did not dance and sing themselves, but hired professional dancing-girls and musical performers
[171] as at the present day. Among the Greeks music and dancing were in high esteem, and formed a part of education—even the gods themselves danced.

535 The performance of the *chauel* or male dancer is not much
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of an improvement on that of the female dancer. Clothed and tricked out like a dancing-girl, he goes through the same kind of motions on another evening to the delight of the spectators. Sometimes he also plays on some instrument, and sings as well; he blows his bagpipes full of wind, and while it escapes melodiously from the holes of the tubes under the play of his fingers he strikes up his ear-piercing song, which is followed by the hip-dance—a threefold artistic effect produced all at once. This class of hermaphrodites, the product of the luxurious East, also resemble the dancing-girls in their abandoned morals.

535 527 [533] [534] [838]

RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENTS.

In this round of festivities entertainments of a religious kind must not be absent, and they are commonly, on these and other occasions, the only ones that are held. They are not called *fantasies;* it is considered very far wrong in any one to call them so. The *chatmeh* or public reading of the whole Koran at one spell begins at vespers. From that until night, and from night-prayers to next morning, the whole of the Koran is gabbled over by school-masters, corpse-washers, and other similar functionaries who can read. The readers of the Koran speak and sing in the paternoster style, in a tone as if cajoling themselves and God, and breathlessly hurrying to the end; the words, nevertheless, have an imposing effect through the emphatic and melodious expression in which they are clothed, and the greater the more mystical they are. The guests, illumined by the blessing arising from the sound of the divine words, converse about all kinds of worldly matters. Indeed they do not generally understand the meaning of the words any more than the readers, and perhaps often the author himself. They do not wish to understand, since the truth of the Koran is raised above all doubts, and to reflect on its meaning, and especially to criticise it, like the *feilosufi*, were worthy of hell fire. The Koran contains mingled together dreamy unintelligible passages, platitudes, repetitions, contradictions, unexpected digressions,

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curses and threatenings against unbelievers, but often also deeply moral ideas and regulations, and wonderful poetry. The statutes of the Koran, the religion of Islam, are apt to lead adherents of the faith to hypocrisy and fanaticism, and interpose the barrier of fatalism and superstition to effort and progress (this, however, is contested by enlightened Mohammedans); but this religion, more, perhaps, than any other, has acted as a bond of union, has formed and united nations together, and has been able to preserve the old patriarchal virtues up to the present day, of which respect for old age, hospitality, and to some extent also female virtue, are the most to be commended.

Another religious reading is the *mulid*, that is, the genealogy of the Prophet, in which the forefathers of the latter, from Adam onwards, are enumerated and their praises sung.

Among the favourite devotional observances are those well-known religious gymnastical exercises called *zikr*. Those taking part in them form a circle or a line. At one end the leader (*murshed*) of the singing seats himself, and sings an ode, which at one time is deeply poetical and religious, at another, through images and similes, like the Song of Solomon, becomes lascivious and indeed obscene. The people sit with their legs crossed, and keep time to the melody of the singer with an uninterrupted "Allah," at first slow, solemn, in a deep bass, turning the head alternately right and left. Gradually the time and the movement of the head become quicker, the upper part of the body takes part in the movements of the head, the "Allah" becomes an "A A Allah." They then assume a kneeling posture and move the body madly about, still keeping time, however, and each like his neighbour. In the third stage the company of pious gymnasts rise to their feet, and their movements become more and more frantic. They pant, they moan, they groan, their voices sound hoarser, they stutter, they yelp out, "Ha, Ha, Allah," and thus for hours the frenzy continues. One or other of them is now sure to drop, becoming giddy, or being attacked by spasms and convulsions. This, however, attracts

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little attention, since the person possessed or "disguised" (*melbûs*) will recover of himself, or if it lasts too long, somebody shouts into his ear the Mohammedan confession of faith. As soon as he can repeat it in his turn the evil spirit leaves him, and he is again an ordinary man as before. 786 796 787

ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE WOMEN.

While during the weeks before a circumcision or a marriage the men are thus spending the nights in pleasures and amusements, the women also get up *fantasiek* in their own manner among themselves. They meet together every day (seldom by night) in the house where the entertainments are given, where they sing, beat the darabuka or hand-drum and the tambourine, and dance too, it may be, like the professional dancing-girls, rattling their castanets. This for the most part, however, is only done by women of the lower ranks, those of the higher listen and look on. Men must not be spectators, not even the master of the house. The professional singers (*almeh*), more virtuous than the dancing-girls, generally exhibit their powers only in the harem, and the men listen to their charming songs through the latticed windows of the women's apartments. 527 [534] [535] [533]

On the occasion of festivities among people of lower rank, especially country people, a man, on the other hand, may witness a public dance of women, veils, however, being worn. The scene is the court-yard or other open space. Late at night, after the evening prayer, the male spectators who choose to come seat themselves in a circle or semicircle, a fire being kept burning near by in order to heat coffee, to furnish lights for pipes, and occasionally to dry the kettle-drums rendered damp by the night-dew. On one side of the circle stand, thronging closely together, the ballad singers or improvvisatori, who at the command of a leader repeat for hours on end a verse manufactured by himself, always in the same melody, for instance:— [533]

"She (the loved one) has made me a cup
Handsome as the castle of Mohammed Ali."

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They also clap their hands, beat the kettle-drums, make gestures and movements of all kinds, wag their heads about, jump, stoop down, but do not move from the spot. At the same time female forms, completely veiled and enveloped in an outer robe, enter the circle and dance, but in their dancing also there is no violent galloping about, nor even hopping, but they move with varying paces, run sideways, backwards and forwards, wriggle, bend, and turn round slowly. The pantomimic motions are made with their hands, their faces not being available for the purpose. The row of singers appears especially to take pleasure in the movements of the dancers, catching up all their bendings and gestures, and repeating them. One woman steps into the circle while another vanishes, or several dance together at the same time, but never in harmony with each other. A spectator now passes through the circle, hurries up to one of the dancers, who has particularly pleased him, and twines a handkerchief round her, in which he has knotted several coins. The more actively and coquettishly the veiled damsel dances, the more admirers she gains, and she may leave the scene hung with handkerchiefs. After some time the unfolded and emptied handkerchief is unexpectedly flung to its owner by the lady, who again appears on the scene, and who has been able to find out, even in the darkness of night, who it was that decorated her and made her the present.

On this occasion a dance which has a half warlike character is also executed specially for the men. The dancer is armed with a sword or a long cudgel, which, hopping and springing, bending and wheeling, he swings as gracefully as possible, with pantomimic and gently threatening movements towards the spectators. Or perhaps two dancers enter the circle, and with similar movements engage in mock combat.

CIRCUMCISION.

On the evening before the great day of Circumcision, the "night of the henna," the women assemble. The henna leaves are kneaded into a dough or paste, which is set in

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pieces on a tray, a taper being stuck on every piece. The women move through the house in procession to an accompaniment of singing, trilling, and kettle-drum playing, the boy who is the occasion of the festival behind the henna tray. The mother and the singing-girls receive presents, the boy has a piece of the henna-paste tied into the hollow of his hand, the assembled women do the same for themselves, and all awake next morning with brownish-red palms. 527 304 824 [431]

On the day of the circumcision itself, the boy, who is now five to ten years old, is dressed in a new and costly garment, a Cashmere shawl, or it may be a woman's robe (perhaps as a sign that up to this time he has belonged to the harem), a gold-embroidered woman's cap is placed on his head, he is mounted on a horse, and rides in grand procession accompanied by musical instruments round the town. In the evening there is great feasting in his parent's house. Next morning, or on the evening after the procession, the barber performs the circumcision with a razor, an operation customary even among the ancient Egyptians. By it the boy becomes clean, and capable of performing religious exercises, of praying and entering the mosque; this religious act is, therefore, in some respects analogous to the Christian rite of confirmation. 304 [292] [783]

The circumcision of girls is performed privately, and may be guessed to have taken place when, on a customary day, girls in red holiday-clothes swarm about on the streets.

MARRIAGE.

As in the case of circumcision, the preparations for a marriage, in the shape of domestic entertainments and ceremonies, commence months before. As soon as a son exhibits the first signs of puberty his parents think of providing him with a wife. In opposition to the views of other peoples these marriages of children are considered very healthy and judicious throughout the East, even among the Christians. The parents justly believe that they thus provide for the well-being of their children. Long before puberty, which follows in their twelfth or fourteenth year, or still earlier, all the girls are given 527 587 [584] [145]

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582 [145] away, that is, are arranged to marry some boy or other, and as soon as both arrive at puberty they are married. Men marry as a rule from their fifteenth to their eighteenth year. These early marriages appear to have by no means a degenerating influence upon the race, but on the contrary a beneficial one, the marriages being, with few exceptions, fruitful and happy, and the women being not so liable to be attacked with female ailments, such as chlorosis, hysteria, and nervous weakness. The same principles are applied also in the case of the domestic animals.

In a learned treatise by a modern Arabic physician who studied in Europe it is maintained, however, that for the men of his country the age of eighteen to twenty, for the women of sixteen, is the most suitable. The main consideration relative to early marriages, the bread question, is regarded by the Oriental only as of secondary importance, he only thinks of it when he is hungry. So long as the son is still too young the father provides for the maintenance of him and his family, [581] when he is old enough he earns his daily bread himself, and when the father grows old the son in turn provides for him.

584 When their young son wishes to have a wife the father and mother set out in quest of a bride for him; by the latter the bath is often selected for this purpose, and her sober reason often brings more suitable pairs together than the impulses of the heart. Both young people have also to acquiesce in the arrangement, they cannot be forced, and the marriage is not valid until on the "uncovering and unveiling" the pair feel a mutual pleasure; but at this age a refusal is rare, and in case of after disillusion the marriage may be easily dissolved on either side. The search for a bride is generally quite unnecessary, as in two-thirds of the cases it has been previously settled that the young fellow is to marry his female cousin, and if he has none, more distant relations are applied to, and lastly strangers. If these marriages of cousins had 582 really such a prejudicial effect upon a race as they are usually represented to have it must have been long ago noticed in Egypt; its inhabitants, however, show no inferiority either from a physical or an intellectual point of view. The low

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rank they hold in the intellectual world is not a consequence of want of understanding, but of want of knowledge; it is a consequence of their stagnating religion, and of the hostility of former governments to enlightenment. Besides being forbidden between very near relatives, marriage is also forbidden between such as have been suckled at the same breast. Among the ancient Egyptians, as already mentioned, marriages were permitted even between brothers and sisters.

At the preliminary betrothal the marriage contract is made between the fathers or guardians on both sides. The father agrees to pay to the father-in-law of his son a certain sum, and part of this is paid at once, the other part is always tied up and settled upon the wife in case she should happen to be divorced. These payments, however, must not be understood as if the parents were simply selling their daughter; the "bride's treasure" is in most cases spent on clothes and ornaments for the bride, and the bridegroom often gives these directly instead of money. And the bride who brings nothing to her husband except her person, lays up for herself from this bride's treasure a fund for cases of misfortune. If the wife has any independent means she does not share it with her husband—it remains her personal property. In the East, accordingly, mercenary marriages—so incompatible with manly dignity—are unknown.

On the evening of the wedding-day is held the marriage banquet, on which great sums are often expended by the more wealthy. Everybody in the place is invited to the house of the bride's parents; whole hecatombs (this is often literally correct) of sheep are slaughtered and devoured with a rapidity that has become proverbial, and with the most voracious appetite. Only the very poorest confine themselves to inviting none but the members of their intimate family circle.

In the course of the day the bride and bridegroom frequently take a bath, to which they often proceed in grand procession. In other cases the bridegroom, when evening has come, takes off his clothes in front of the house before the gaping crowds, and has his whole body scraped and bathed by the barber. The chief festivity does not take place, however, until nightfall.

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585 Under the red glow of crackling pitch torches, amid the unmelo-
[372] dious noise of copper hand-drums, the joyful toot of a double
534 reed-pipe, and the hymns chanted by the schoolmasters and
[533] other pillars of the faith, followed by half the inhabitants of the town, the bridegroom walks from night prayer in the mosque to his own dwelling. Here the procession halts. The singers form a ring and sing around the hero of the wedding, for whom the marriage torches form an illumination. A transparent vernal down is springing on his full smooth cheeks, his stature gives hope that he will grow for some years still, his voice as it is heard now and then sounds childishly delicate, or struggles painfully with the voice of manhood. The
[292] immature form of the youth is clothed in a coat of scarlet cloth, for the first time the manly turban rises on his head, and by his side hangs the marriage sword. Solemnly, seriously, and slowly he paces onwards in the midst of a few of his companions. The procession halts before this or that house, and the chief personages and musicians are regaled with sweetened coffee and sherbet, musket shots sound in the stillness of night, till at last his father's house is reached. Hither the bride has already come in another direction from the
[292] house of her parents, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot enveloped in a Cashmere shawl, which, like the red coat of the bridegroom, is generally borrowed for this day only. She is embraced, and almost carried by two wives, and followed by a crowd of women and girls uttering cries of joy. The house of feasting is lighted up outside with gay lamps and lanterns, and here the people amuse themselves with the dancing-girls, singers, and buffoons, or, if more seriously disposed, listen to the mysterious words of the Koran, or tire themselves out in zikrs, while the bridegroom mounts to the chambers of the women, and lifts the veil of her who has been chosen for him, and whom he has never yet seen, unless, tormented by impatience, he has already, on the occasion of the procession from the mosque, gone through this momentous proceeding in the house of the bride. There she stands before
[302] him, the little, tender, lovely maiden, her eyes deeply black-
[301] ened with kohl, her hands coloured red, her face dotted over

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with beauty-spots, her tender limbs can scarcely support all her heavy ornaments of gold and silver, her armlets, bracelets, anklets, crown, hair-chains, and other trinkets. The silken jacket falls smoothly over her breast, that scarcely as yet shows any swelling. The doll-bride blushes in childish modesty, and, instead of her husband, not seldom wishes—her playthings. He, however, intimates to her, in the name of God, the all-merciful, that he has become her husband. If the bridegroom has had reason to be satisfied with his bride, the women who have been in attendance on the pair utter cries of pleasure, and the joy passes through the whole house, and extends to the people collected below. Ceremonies very similar were customary in the middle ages also among our German forefathers.

Early on the morning after this "night of access" there is much congratulation in the house of feasting; the guests receive coffee, and are sprinkled with rose-water, which they rub on their hair, their beards, faces, and hands. The ancient Egyptians used to anoint themselves with ointments, but this is no longer practised. On this day the bridegroom takes a walk in the open air in his red coat with some of his comrades and sings pious songs; for three days or more he goes about without engaging in any occupation, and at this time displays an extraordinarily serious mien.

A man that marries a second time invites only his nearer relatives and friends, or a scribe, to the betrothal feast in his house. Thereupon the marriage contract is drawn up, the dowry paid, a prayer uttered, and he has now free access to his betrothed.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES.

A shrill cry, as loud as the female falsetto can produce, pierces the air, first one, then another, then several, then ever so many. A soul has departed. The cry was the wail of sorrow uttered by the women concerned, and at the same time the signal which brings up crowds of women to lament along with them. On the street, before the house of mourn-

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764 ing, a long row of straw mats and carpets is laid, on which
152 sit many men silently smoking their chibooks. Some men and boys, connections of the departed, run to and fro on the street uttering cries of grief and covering their faces with their hands. "Oh, my father," they cry (or "mother," "brother," &c., as the case may be), "Oh, my sorrow, my death; oh, despair; oh, my strength; oh, camel of my house" [825] (camel as a symbol of strength or support). Friends show their sympathy and attempt to give consolation, but even men, [562] at other times so undemonstrative, weep loudly and give themselves up to grief. What, then, is to be expected of the women, with their more easily excited feelings? They put on the dirtiest dark-blue dresses they can find, loosen their hair, and display their breasts, smear these and their faces with filth, pluck out their hair and tear their own flesh in a frenzy of grief. All order ceases, the loud outcry is raised again and again by the mourning-women hired for the purpose, and those who come to give consolation and show their sympathy go beyond the real mourners and join the hundred-voiced chorus. It was customary among the ancient Egyptians, [191] and also among the Jews, to indulge in these loud lamentations, to smear themselves with filth, and to hire mourning-women. The Prophet strictly forbade it, but the Egyptian women will not let themselves be deprived of these ancestral methods of expressing their grief.

764 Scarcely have the eyes of the beloved dead been closed and his head turned towards Mecca, when preparations are begun for getting the corpse out of the house. The ancient Egyptians, on the other hand, retained the body at least seventy days in the house for the purpose of embalming it, before it was placed in the tomb. All the former repose and dignity of the Oriental are now gone; beside the dead body are found only loud despair and headlong haste. The doctor [693] or corpse-inspector is first sent for before waiting for the first traces of the phenomena of death, and he must give permission for the burial of the body while it is yet warm. Other messengers have already purchased the linen for the shroud, while outside, the grave-digger is already preparing the last

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abodo. The corpse-washer goes to work with the utmost 764
care; he washes the body up and down, repeatedly cleaning [767]
out all external openings, including the nose and ears, and
stops them with cotton; cotton is placed even between the
toes and fingers and under the armpits. After the body is
dried with equal care it is enveloped in the linen cloth, which
has meantime been sewed together, and in such a way that
no part of the dead is now visible. It is then laid on a bier
without a coffin (it is only the Christians that hastily put a [184]
coffin together), and a green or red pall is spread over it.
After a benediction has been said over it in the mosque, it is
carried to the graveyard.

Hither the dead are borne at a rapid pace, those at least
that were Mohammedans. With a haste and hurry that
nothing can check the funeral procession rolls along, amid
the murmur of *la ilah ill allah*, in order to carry the bier
from the city of the living to the city of the dead. The
advanced guard is formed by some blind and poor people
and petty scribes, perhaps also some boys as a kind of chorist-
ers, and some flag-bearers. The bier is borne by four men,
friends of the deceased, who are relieved by others of his
friends, and thus the rapid march does not meet with the
slightest interruption. A long procession of mourners and
sympathizers follows, all in their ordinary working-day
blouses, the relatives in the oldest and filthiest possible.
Several portly well-to-do gentlemen pant behind, or have got
themselves mounted upon trotting asses. By the side or at
the end of the procession follows the wailing chorus of women, [834]
who on this day show remarkably little of their usual strict-
ness in veiling themselves.

Having reached its destination, the corpse, wrapped only
in its white shroud, is taken from the bier and let down
without a coffin into a perpendicular excavation. During
this proceeding, if the corpse is that of a female her former
street mantle is held spread out over her in order to keep
off longing glances—under such circumstances little to be
expected. It is not the perpendicular excavation, however,
that receives the dead body, which, being protected by no

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764 coffin, would be crushed by the clods of earth heaped over it. This excavation serves only as the entrance to a roomy earthen vault, hollowed out alongside of it, in which the body is placed, and is thus protected as well as if in a coffin. The entrance to the lateral vault is then built up with bricks, and during this lengthy operation the people standing around
[533] sing the melodious song "God pardon the Mohammedan men and Mohammedan women, the believing men and believing women" (*allahu maghfir el moslimin u el moslimat u el mumenin u el mumenat*). One of the scribes, an imam, a
795 schoolmaster, or the corpse-washer, delivers himself of a short
764 stereotyped funeral discourse, in which the deceased—who is no doubt straining his ears to listen—is instructed as to what he is to answer at the examination he will have to undergo in the coming night. Once more the confession of the Mohammedan faith is impressed upon him. For there come to
[796] test him two angels of horrid aspect, Nakir and Munkir by name, and torment him soul and body if he does not stand on the firm basis of Islam. Lastly, those present whisper
764 the *fatha*, and amid loud invocations to the gracious and all-merciful One, clod after clod is flung by them into the grave. The male members of the family who act as mourners place themselves in a row, receive the consolatory words and hand-shaking of the people who have come along with them, and every one hastens to the place whence he has come.

765 In the night we hear behind the walls of the house of mourning the shrieking of women, now wound off in the trochees of a machine in action, anon in the dactyls of the steam-horse thundering along at full speed, or breaking up into the indefinite clack of a mill. Briskly is the kettle-drum beaten, and high up, from time to time, like a rocket, rises a shriek from a hundred throats. The earth gives out a hollow sound from the stamping of the feet of the filth-besmeared women. It sounds like an ungovernable outburst
[535] of joy and revelry; it is the corpse dance, through which the
[154] wife gives vent to her stormy grief.

The men, however, pass the "night of loneliness" with their friends and neighbours before the house or in a neigh-

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

louring court-yard, drinking coffee and enveloped in clouds 765
of tobacco-smoke. At the entrance or exit of a sympathizing neighbour, though he has merely come to sip a small cupful of coffee, the mourners rise and are addressed with such customary phrases of consolation as, "Such is life; but you are still alive yourself." General and individual conversations go on, in which some of the mourners take an active part, [154] while others, bathed in tears, sit dumb in a corner. In an adjoining room lean schoolmasters occupy themselves with chanting the "book that cannot be doubted," or murmur a three-thousand-fold "Allah," in order to induce God to pity the poor soul of him who has gone to his rest. This mourning reception with coffee lasts for three days if the deceased was grown up, and the near relatives and friends remain together even during the night and take a common meal.

On the following days we hear in the house of mourning [533] such a sorrowful, slow, monotonous song of lamentation, uttered in a low tone by a company of women, and mingled with weeping and sobbing, that it thrills painfully through bone and marrow. Thus for years does a mother or wife 769 bewail one whom she has loved and lost, on certain days of the week, or on certain days of the year consecrated to the memory of the dead, collecting her female friends, relatives, and neighbours, and especially practised mourning women, in order to relieve her sorrowful heart, and to have the virtues of the deceased duly sung; while the men gather round them a company of their friends and cause the Koran to be read in memory of their lost ones. Among the ancient [191] Egyptians similar mourning hymns were sung during the [533] period of seventy days that the body was being embalmed. The great festivals also do not pass without visits being made to the graves of dear ones, as we have seen above.

Thus does Islam honour its dead.

[pp. 204–408 not processed]